

REUTER
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WASHINGTON

U.S. Betrayed Libyan Coup Plotters; Former U.S. Official Says
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U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN TRIPOLI, LIBYA, BETRAYED MILITARY OFFICERS PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW LIBYAN LEADER MUAMMAR GADDAFI IN 1971 AND THIS LED TO THE EXECUTION OF THE PLOTS; A FORMER U.S. INTELLIGENCE ANALYST SAID TODAY.

"THEY WERE BETRAYED BY THE AMERICANS," SAID JOSEPH CHURBA, WHO SERVED AS THE SENIOR AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE ADVISER ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE EARLY 1970s.

CHURBA, WHO LATER SERVED AS A FOREIGN POLICY ADVISER TO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE RONALD REAGAN AND WORKED BRIEFLY IN THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION, TODAY URGED THE PRESIDENT TO SEEK THE OUSTER OF GADDAFI BY "OVERT AND COVERT MEANS," POSSIBLY INCLUDING ASSASSINATION.

CHURBA, WHO HEADS THE CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, A PRIVATE CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH GROUP, TOLD REPORTERS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE: "IN 1971 (LIBYA), MILITARY OFFICERS TOLD OUR EMBASSY THAT THEY WOULD OVERTHROW GADDAFI."

HE SAID THE PLOTS WERE APPARENTLY SEEKING AID FROM THE UNITED STATES AND ASSUMED THAT WASHINGTON WANTED THE OUSTER OF THE RADICAL LEADER, KNOWN FOR HIS ANTI-AMERICAN RHETORIC.

BUT ACCORDING TO CHURBA, THE U.S. OFFICIALS "HANDED THE INFORMATION OVER TO GADDAFI AND THESE MEN WERE ELIMINATED." ASKED WHAT MOTIVE THE AMERICANS MIGHT HAVE HAD FOR THWARTING THE COUP, HE REPLIED: "OIL IS A VERY BIG INTEREST... THERE ARE ECONOMIC OIL INTERESTS IN LIBYA THAT DID NOT WANT TO SEE THE CHANGE."

EVEN TODAY, HE SAID, THERE ARE ENTRENCHED BUREAUCRATS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHO MAINTAIN THAT ANYONE REPLACING GADDAFI WOULD BE WORSE FOR U.S. INTERESTS, WHICH ENTAIL LARGE OIL HOLDINGS IN THE SPARSELY POPULATED NORTH AFRICAN COUNTRY. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IF THEN-PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON KNEW OF THE DECISION TO BETRAY THE COUP.

CHURBA SAID LIBYA HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN FUNDING MARXIST TERRORISM AND SUBVERSION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND HAD URGED THAT REAGAN'S ADMINISTRATION BE "TERMINATED."

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